

I submit to you that today, right now, this replacement of popular will by anti-majoritarian rule-rigging could destroy us. Today more than ever, voters want to know that their vote counts every election. And continuing to give minorities here in the Senate power to stop change is dangerously dissonant with the current political mood of this country. Take power away from the American people at your peril.

Finally, on this question of the value we should place on consistency, I want to raise the problem of the city firehouse. Firehouses are places that value consistency and tradition. Firefighters spend a lot of time in close quarters together. When that alarm rings, they are required to work together in precise and disciplined unison to get out the door in seconds in order to save lives and property. Practices change in a firehouse but carefully and through consensus decision making. Keeping everybody together matters when the stakes are so high.

But what would happen if inside that firehouse, a sizable group of firefighters decided one day that the mission of the department should no longer be to put out fires but maybe, instead, just to let them burn a little? Wouldn't then the value of consensus decision making become a little less important? If you were a homeowner, wouldn't you want to make sure that the firefighters who still wanted to fight fires were setting the rules and not the guys who are OK with the houses in the neighborhood burning down?

I know this is a crude analogy, but to value consistency or tradition above everything else, I think you have to be pretty certain that everybody in your club, everybody on your team is guided by the same foundational goal.

In the case of the U.S. Senate, our goal, our endgame has always been simple: the preservation of American democracy, the belief that every American should have a say in who governs, and the persons whom they choose and no one else should be seated in power.

We have had fights—often vicious in nature—over the course of our Nation's history over how fast we should expand the vote, how quickly we should reform our Constitution to allow for more direct democracy. But never before has one party actively advocated for the lessening of democracy. Never before has one party openly advocated for candidates who receive the smaller share of the vote to be made President of the United States.

In the last year, a democratic Rubicon has been crossed by one party, and we can't ignore this devastating blow to our Nation. You cannot value consistency in practice when a large faction of your group's members don't believe in the underlying mission of your organization any longer. The firehouse can't just keep doing the same things it always does year after year for the sake of consistency or tradition or con-

sensus when two or three of the members who hop on the firetruck when that alarm sounds aren't intending to actually put out the fire when they arrive at the building.

Giving Republicans a veto power over legislation when they no longer believe in the same way the Democrats do or Republicans used to in the sacredness of the vote is to risk the voluntary destruction of our democracy.

Consistency as a value has merit. It does. But in this business, consistency is often put on an unhealthy pedestal. What is the value of being consistent when all of the circumstances around you are changing? Where is the strength in sticking to your position when everything around you is in metamorphosis? When democracy itself is being attacked in a brutal, coordinated, unprecedented volley of blows, what is the good of holding to a position just for the sake of being consistent if the primary consequence is to simply green light the assault to continue?

Consistency and tradition and bipartisanship—they matter but not at the expense of democracy, not in a moment when millions of voters are questioning the wisdom of American democracy because no matter whom they elect, nothing seems to change, and not when one party has increasingly abandoned the joint project to which all Members of this body swore an oath as a condition of our membership.

I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I know Senator MARSHALL is ready to speak, and I apologize for delaying him with my rather long remarks.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SESQUICENTENNIAL OF CALVERT CITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for 150 years, Calvert City has been a central hub of the Jackson Purchase, serving as a focal point for pioneers, farmers, and railroaders from all over western Kentucky. The town's enduring legacy is a tribute to the enterprising demeanor of those trailblazing Kentuckians who first called the Purchase home. In recognition of Calvert City's sesquicentennial, I am privileged to join this vibrant Kentucky community in celebrating 150 years of Bluegrass heritage.

Calvert City started off as nothing more than a depot alongside the Paducah & Elizabethtown Railroad, but

quickly blossomed as settlers spread west into the Jackson Purchase to profit from the region's fertile soil and easy access to the Tennessee, Cumberland, Ohio, and Mississippi Rivers. By the time the Kentucky Dam was completed nearby in 1944, bringing jobs and hydroelectric power to the region, the town was a flourishing center of commerce. Today, Calvert City is home to numerous advanced chemical manufacturing facilities and continues to play a critical role in western Kentucky's economy.

In recognition of Calvert City's pioneer spirit, the town is celebrating 150 years of history with 150 events throughout the calendar year. These ceremonies are made especially poignant by the passing of Mayor Lynn Boyd Jones this January. He had dreamed about Calvert City's 150th anniversary since the town's centennial 50 years ago and was an early planner of this year's festivities.

As Kentucky emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, the celebration will be a uniquely joyous tribute. All aspects of Calvert City's storied history will be on display, from railroad cars, to an auto show, to events at Oak Hill, the original home of town founder Potilla Calvert.

I want to give special thanks to the Calvert City civic leaders who made this year's sesquicentennial celebration possible. It is through their hard work and dedication that the town continues to prosper, so many years after its founding. On behalf of the Senate, I share our congratulations with every Calvert City family and join them in honoring 150 years of proud Kentucky traditions.

LGBTQ PRIDE MONTH

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise in recognition of LGBTQ Pride Month of 2021. For more than 50 years, Pride Month has offered us a chance to celebrate lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer—LGBTQ—Americans and to reflect upon the progress that our Nation has made in how we treat this community in law, policy, custom, and everyday life. It also is an opportunity to redouble our efforts to end enduring discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

President Biden promptly issued a Presidential proclamation recognizing June of 2021 as Pride Month. With the authorization of Secretary of State Antony Blinken, U.S. diplomatic missions around the world are displaying the pride flag as a clear visual representation of American values. On the very first day of his administration, President Biden issued an executive order on preventing and combating discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation. This decision has already driven new policies at the agency level making an important difference in real people's lives, from protecting transgender individuals seeking safe shelter to reversing the

Trump-era ban that prohibited transgender people from serving in the military. It is clear that LGBTQ Americans can count on the Biden-Harris administration to do everything possible to champion fundamental human rights on their behalf.

The bad news is that while we see progress at a Federal level, the Human Rights Campaign assesses that 2021 is the worst year in terms of State-level anti-LGBTQ legislation in recent history. Governors have signed 17 anti-LGBTQ bills into law, already exceeding the 15 anti-LGBTQ laws passed in 2015, which held the previous record in recent history. There are even more bills waiting Governors' signatures or veto override votes. Most of these bills shamefully target transgender children. These bills and laws are untethered from trends in real public opinion. Recent polling from Gallup finds that support for same-sex marriage is at a new high of 70 percent of all Americans. A PBS/NPR/Marist poll published in April revealed that two-thirds of all Americans oppose legislation to ban transgender student athletes from joining sports teams that match their gender identity, a number that barely changes across partisan lines.

The American people clearly agree with the principle expressed in President Biden's executive order: "All persons should receive equal treatment under the law, no matter their gender identity or sexual orientation." It is as simple as that.

When it comes to human rights, civil rights, and being treated with dignity and respect, everybody in this country, regardless of where they live, should receive equal treatment. The House of Representatives passed the Equality Act in February to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in education, employment, housing, credit, Federal jury service, public accommodations, and with regard to receiving Federal financial assistance. These protections build upon and align with the Supreme Court's landmark decision 1 year ago in *Bostock vs. Clayton County*, which affirmed that the sex discrimination prohibition in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 also applies to discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. That ruling states, "it is impossible to discriminate against a person for being homosexual or transgender without discriminating against that individual based on sex." We still urgently need to pass the Equality Act, however, to apply this interpretation to all areas of civil rights law and to apply protections against discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity to a broader scope of entities. I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the legislation and will work to advance it this Congress.

As Harvey Milk said, "It takes no compromise to give people their rights. It takes no money to respect the indi-

vidual. It takes no political deal to give people freedom." This Pride Month, I urge my colleagues in the Senate to join me in supporting the Equality Act to ensure that we protect the human and civil rights all Americans. Our government should do all it can to promote equality, compassion, and empathy—not discrimination, bigotry, and hate.

CONFIRMATION OF KIRAN ARJANDAS AHUJA

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I rise to support the nomination of Kiran Ahuja to serve as the Director of the Office of Personnel Management. Mrs. Ahuja is highly qualified and has a deep commitment to public service that will serve her well as the Director of OMB. I am confident that she has the skills to rebuild the civil service and restore protections for civil servants that were rolled back by the Trump administration.

Mrs. Ahuja spent her childhood travelling across the South with her parents as they worked to provide desperately needed mental health services to underserved communities. After graduating from Spelman College and the University of Georgia School of Law, Mrs. Ahuja began her career in public service as a civil rights attorney at the Department of Justice. She went on to lead the White House Initiative for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and then serve as the Chief of Staff for OPM as it responded to a data breach that exposed the personal information of millions of Federal employees and contractors.

Kiran Ahuja will be tasked with leading OPM as it faces a new set of challenges. After 4 years of attacks by the Trump administration on the protections at the core of our merit-based civil service system, OPM needs a leader who understands that Federal workers serve our country, not the individual or political party currently occupying the White House.

OPM is an independent Federal agency tasked with a vital mission: ensuring that the Federal workforce delivers top-notch service to the American people. The next OPM Director must recognize, as President Biden and Mrs. Ahuja do, that union organizing and collective bargaining are in the public interest and that these rights are vital safeguards to protect the merit system principles of the civil service. The next OPM Director must also work to attract new talent to Federal agencies that have lost valuable expertise and modernize OPM's outdated information technology systems. I am confident that Mrs. Ahuja has the skills and knowledge to meet these challenges and to carry out the agency's mission.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO MAL LEARY

• Mr. KING. Mr. President, I rise today to honor a Maine legend who will soon

be leaving his post after nearly a half century of diligent, inquisitive journalism that has kept our State's citizens better informed. At the beginning of July, Mal Leary will sign off for the final time from Maine Public Broadcasting, concluding a 45-year career during which he became one of the most trusted voices in Maine media.

When listeners heard Mal's distinctive Maine rasp come across the airwaves, they knew they were getting the straight news from a model journalist. His integrity and intelligence came through in every story, diving into the policy details in a measured, well-reasoned way that did not betray a bias toward any ideology, political party, or elected officials. Most importantly, every time you finished listening to a Mal story, you knew more about your community and your State than you did just a few moments before.

Mal wasn't only held in high esteem by listeners. I can tell you from personal experience that when Mal is in a room, elected officials notice his presence. He loomed large among the Maine press corps, and his ability to unravel and explain a complicated policy question was only matched by his political instincts. While others, including legislators, were focused on the questions of the day, Mal would look two or three steps down the road to anticipate the pitfalls facing any given proposal. I learned quickly that I always needed to have my facts straight before I talked to Mal Leary.

His innate understanding of both policy and policymakers made Mal's interviews one-of-a-kind. I would often start a conversation with him, expecting to discuss the issues of the day, only to be questioned on an issue that wouldn't come up for another few months or review a legislative hearing from 3 weeks prior. Refusing to be a prisoner of the moment, he always looked at the big picture, and, critically, he made sure that the elected officials he covered did the same.

Maine will be poorer without Mal Leary roaming the State capitol, but he is leaving the Maine press corps in good hands that he had a part in training. A fountain of institutional knowledge, Mal was always generous with his time and his experience, filling in young reporters on the historical context behind long-gestating problems or making sure folks were up to speed on legislative procedures. This next generation of reporters have each grown by absorbing Mal's wisdom, working to compete with him, or a combination of the two, so although he may be leaving for greener pastures, his lessons and influence will remain.

I find a bit of irony in these remarks because even as I attempt to honor Mal, I sense that he will have some discomfort taking the compliment. The definition of a model reporter, Mal wasn't focused on befriending his subjects or accumulating personal accolades; he was always dead set on getting to the truth and bringing that